January 2012 Weather Summary

Brrr…it's been a cold year so far in Kenai Fjords National Park! Temperatures recorded at the Seward airport remained below average throughout the month of January with only one day, January 11th, warming above the freezing mark. The cold temperatures were often accompanied by clear skies with the exception of a large winter storm that dumped more than a foot of snow and rain for a total of 2.54 inches of water equivalent from January 9-12. Mid-storm, on January 11th, temperatures rose to a maximum of 37 degrees F, marking the warmest day of the month (and only day above freezing) with a daily average of 33 degrees F. (Kudos to the National Weather Service for their spot-on prediction of this storm in their short-term forecast!) Unfortunately, the weather station at the Seward airport malfunctioned a few days later and no weather was recorded from January 15-18. With four days of missing temperature and precipitation data, averages cannot be accurately calculated and should not be used for comparisons for this month. However, for the remainder of the month, every daily temperature recorded at the Seward airport (with the exception of Jan. 11th) was below the long term monthly average of 27.1 degrees F.

The closest weather station to the Seward airport is the Exit Glacier SNOTEL station, located 7 miles northwest of the airport near Kenai Fjords National Park's visitor facilities. The climate at Exit Glacier exhibits more interior-like conditions than in Seward (where the ocean has a greater moderating effect) with colder, snowier winters and warmer, drier summers. This station recorded a complete dataset for the month of January and reveals that the temperatures were very cold during the period that the Seward airport was missing data, with the lowest and third lowest average daily temperatures of the month occurring during that period. (The three lowest average daily temperatures occurred on 1/18, 1/19, and 1/17, (-15.9, -15.2 and -13.4 degrees F), respectively). The average daily temperature at Exit Glacier in January was a brisk 1.6 degrees F! Temperatures recorded at the SNOTEL were significantly lower than at the Seward airport but, if the same temperature pattern was true at the Seward airport, then we would be able to report a significantly cold departure from normal for the month of January. Average monthly temperatures are unavailable at the Exit Glacier SNOTEL as this is the first year of operation.

Also of note:

- January 2012 set cold weather records across southwestern Alaska. Read more in a summary compiled by the Anchorage office of the National Weather Service.
- The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center's one month weather outlook (February 2012) favors below normal temperatures and normal precipitation for the Kenai Fjords area. The three month outlook (Feb-Mar-Apr) favors below normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.
- NASA's Earth Observatory provides a Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) image of southwest Alaska and sea ice extent in mid-January 2012 when. According to the National Snow and Ice Data Center, it was the highest ice extent in several years.
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released a Draft National Fish, Wildlife and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy for public review through March 5, 2012.
- NOAA climate services portal serves as a single point-of-entry for NOAA's extensive climate information, data, products, services, and the climate science magazine *ClimateWatch.*
- Additional, detailed climate information is available from the UAF Alaska Climate Research Center monthly state-wide summaries http://akclimate.org/Summary/current_sum.html

Read more to find out about the local climate for January 2012

Seward Airport Temperature, January 2012 (station 26438)

Average temperature for the month of January 2012 is unavailable due to missing data.
The 30-year climate normal based on the 1981-2010 monthly average is 27.1 degrees F.

Seward Airport Precipitation, January 2012 (station 26438)

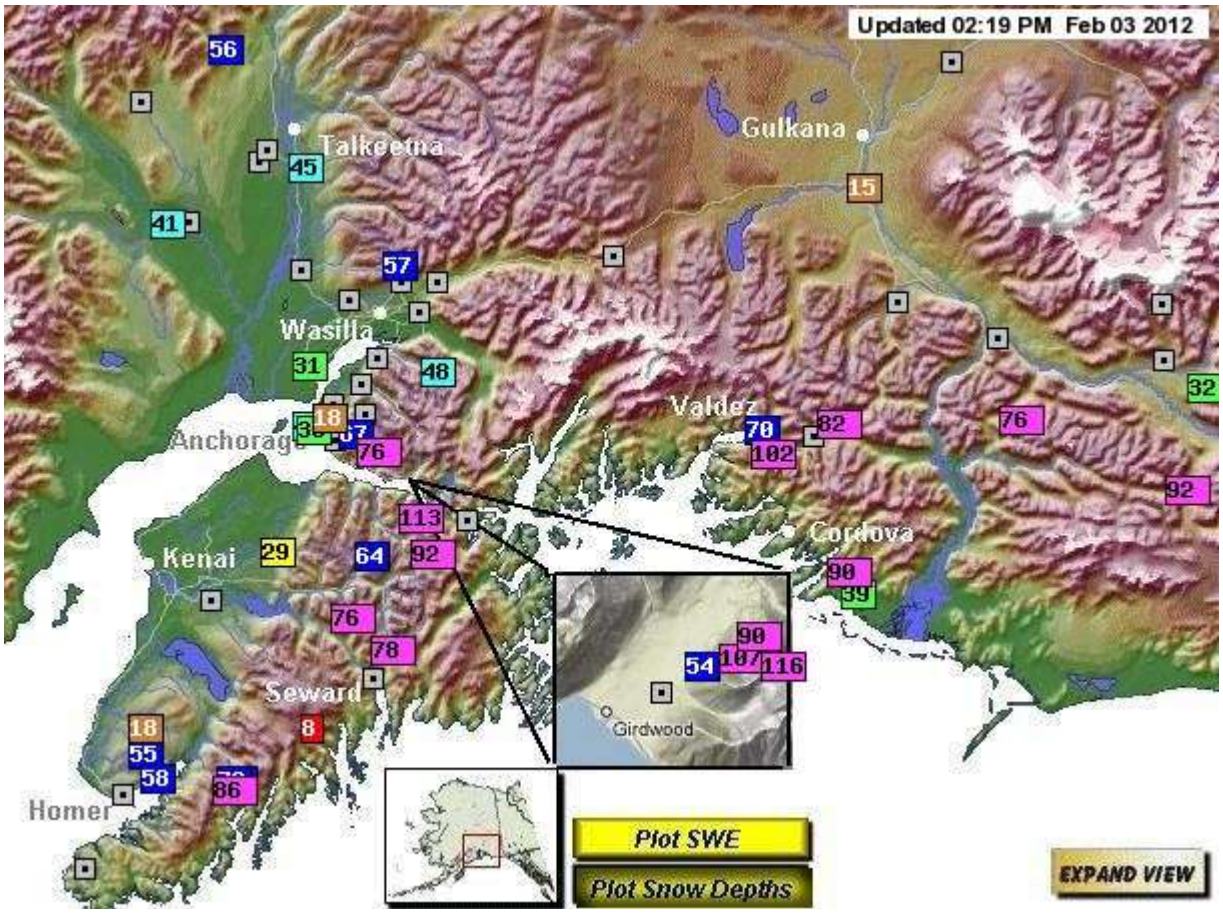
Average precipitation for the month of January 2012 is unavailable due to missing data.
The 30-year climate normal based on the 1981-2010 monthly average is 8.07 inches of precipitation.

Rivers

Resurrection River *at Exit Glacier Bridge is monitored by the Alaska-Pacific River Forecast Center: http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/index.php?wfo=pafc. Resurrection River stage height is currently well below the flood action stage.*

Exit Creek *water level (stage height) data is not collected in winter.*

Snow & Ice



Snow depths reported across southcentral Alaska on Feb. 3rd: http://aprfc.arh.noaa.gov/sd_pafc_sites.html. Snow is monitored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service: http://www.ambcs.org/ with most measurements and reporting taking place December to May.

Based on Snowcourse measurements, snow depth at Exit Glacier on January 31st was 61 inches, 26.7 inches more than last year at this time, with a water equivalent of 15 inches.

Weather Station data (map of [some] stations Western Region Climate Center or MesoWest)

- Seward Airport
- Seward Hwy MP#12
- Grouse Crk Divide
- Exit Glacier
- Exit Glacier SNOTEL
- Harding Icefield
- McArthur Pass
- Nuka Glacier
- Pilot Rock
- Buoy 76-Cape Cleare

Weather Forecasts

- Seward Summary
- Marine Forecast
- Surface Map
- Graphical Forecast
- 4-8 Day Forecast